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News Release

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Last of 5 defendants sentenced for marijuana distribution

The last of five people involved in a conspiracy to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marijuana were sentenced last week in federal court.

Thomas Fischer, 48, Ashland, Ore., and Lorraine Jacqueline Wright, 48, Redmond, Wash., were sentenced June 25 in Minneapolis by United States District Court Judge Michael Davis on one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute in excess of 100 kilograms of marijuana.

Fischer was sentenced to 24 months in prison and four years of supervised release, and Wright was sentenced to 70 months in prison and four years of supervised release. Three other defendants involved have already been sentenced on one count of conspiracy. Michael Richard Berry, 25, St. Louis Park, was sentenced to 30 months in prison and four years of supervised release on May 15. He pleaded guilty on Jan. 29.

Iain Albert Kane, 24, New Hope, was sentenced to 15 months in prison and four years of supervised release on May 15. He pleaded guilty on Sept. 27, 2007. Christopher Paul Knowlton, 25, Brooklyn Park, was sentenced to 24 months in prison and three years of supervised release on April 28. He pleaded guilty on Sept. 19, 2007.

According to their respective plea agreements, they knowingly conspired with each other and others to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute 100 or more kilograms of a substance containing a detectable amount of marijuana from 2001 through June 15, 2007.

According to an affidavit filed by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Fischer, Kane and Wright were observed during an "arranged controlled buy" on June 15, 2007, and later stopped on a traffic stop. Agents seized approximately 50 pounds of marijuana from the trunk of Wright's vehicle. A search warrant was executed at a Brooklyn Park residence where the three were observed earlier in the day, and agents confiscated approximately 200 pounds of marijuana, a firearm and approximately \$62,000 in cash.

DEA agents in Oregon executed a search warrant on June 18, 2007, at an Oregon residence

and found evidence of a previous sizeable marijuana cultivation operation. The affidavit also states that Fischer began cultivating marijuana in 2001 and continued until his arrest in Minnesota on June 15, 2007.

This case was the result of an investigation by the DEA, the Minnesota State Patrol, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, the Oregon State Police Department, the Jackson County Sheriff's Office (Oregon) and the Brooklyn Park Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ann M. Anaya.